

B. Air Access Planning

(Previous Reference: C.O.S. (61) 56th Meeting, Minute 1A).

C.O.S. (61) 299

THE COMMITTEE had before them three telegrams⁺ from the United Kingdom National Military Representative, SHAPE, on air access planning, and a Note by the Air Ministry on the same subject.

LORD MOUNTBATTEN said that the most important single factor to be considered in the telegrams before them was that contained in paragraph 3D of UKNMR 344, in which General Norstad had said that attacks on Soviet surface-to-air missile and anti-aircraft sites in or near the air corridor would be subject to his decision. This point had been inserted by General Norstad in the final version of the telegram before them because he did not want to risk having his hands tied by the United States Government. It would be necessary for the Committee and the Foreign Office, respectively, to give advice to Sir George Mills and Sir Harold Caccia on General Norstad's proposals as a matter of urgency. To this end, the Joint Planning Staff should examine the two telegrams⁺ and prepare draft guidance to Sir George Mills for telephone clearance that afternoon. He understood that the Foreign Office were taking similar action regarding advice to Sir Harold Caccia and that they would send a copy to the Secretary before despatching it.

In discussion the following points were made:-

- (e) It was most unlikely that it would be possible to identify the particular gun position or missile site which had engaged our aircraft; failing such identification, counter attacks could therefore only be regarded as political gestures of our determination. In addition, in view of the number of such installations, attacks on selected sites would in no way maintain our freedom of passage through the air corridors. Similarly, there were a large number of Soviet and Satellite airfields at distances up to 200 miles from the air corridors from which fighter attacks could be mounted. In sum, it would not be feasible to maintain regular services to Berlin in the face of air and ground opposition, but it might be possible to push through individual escorted convoys.
- (f) In paragraph 6 of UKNMR 344, General Norstad had proposed to continue to assert civil air rights by mounting a civil transport probe with fighter support. The Committee considered that it was unlikely that civil operators would be prepared to continue flying once safe passage was no longer guaranteed by the Russians.

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